

Message Text

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13

ACTION HEW-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 ISO-00 EB-11 AGR-20 SCI-06 DRC-01

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R 180101Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7560

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: TBIO EAGR ETRD JA

SUBJ: JAPANESE PROHIBITION ON SORBIC ACID IN WINE

1. IN SCICOUNS COURTDNY CALL ON MR. MAMORU TSUNASHIMA, DIRCETOR, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIVISION, MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND WELFARE, TSUNASHIMA MENTIONED THAT CONSIDERABLE QUANTITIES OF FRENCH AND GERMAN WINE WERE BEING HELD UP AT JAPANESE PORTS BY JAPANESE HEALTH AUTHORITIES DUE TO PRESENCE OF 5-6 PPM OF SORBIC ACID AS PRESERVATIVE. TSUNASHIMA STATED THAT JAPANESE STANDARDS PERMIT NO SORBIC ACID, WHILE EUROPEAN WINE MAKING PRACTICE SOMETIMES INVOLVES USE OF AS MUCH AS 200 PPM. WHILE JAPANESE PROHIBITION IS NOT NEW, IT APPARENTLY ONLY RECENTLY BEGAN TO BE ENFORCED, REFLECTING, TSUNASHIMA SAID, WIDESPREAD JAPANESE CONCERN OVER FOOD ADDITIVES AND CONTAMINANTS. TSUNASHIMA RECOUNTED WITH SOME AMUSEMENT THAT PROBLEM AROSE DURING TANAKA'S VISIT TO BONN AND PARIS, AND BOTH FRENCH AND GERMAN REPS HAD CALLED ON HEALTH MINISTRY TO ALLOW WINE TO ENTER AT LEAST WHILE PRIME MINISTER VISITING THEIR COUNTRIES.

2. TSUNASHIMA SAID JAPANESE HEALTH AUTHORITIES INCLINED TO AGREE THEIR PROHIBITION ON SORBIC ACID UNNECESSARILY STRICT, AND LIKELY TO BE RAISED FOLLOWING REVIEW NOW IN PROGRESS. HE ALSO NOTED US WINES, WHICH UP TILL NOW HAVE ENTERED JAPAN ONLY IN LIMITED QUANTITIES, WERE EXPECTED TO BE IMPORTED SOON IN LARGER AMOUNTS,
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BUT HE MADE NO INQUIRIES ABOUT PRESENCE OF SORBIC ACID IN US

PRODUCT.

3. EMBASSY UNAWARE WHETHER US WINEMAKERS EMPLOY SORBIC ACID, BUT ASSUME DEPARTMENT OR FDA WOULD WISH TO MAKE INQUIRIES ON THIS MATTER, AT LEAST IN CONNECTION WITH PROSPECTIVE INCREASE OF US WINE EXPORTS TO JAPAN. IF US PRODUCT FREE OF THIS ADDITIVE, THIS COULD PROVIDE FAVORABLE EDGE AS LONG AS JAPANESE PROHIBITION LASTS.

4. TO AVOID ADVERSE PUBLIC REACTIONS, JAPANESE AUTHORITIES HAVE REQUESTED THAT INFORMATION CONCERNING THIS PROBLEM BE HANDLED DISCREETLY.
INGERSOLL

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